



The Director-General



Secretary General

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025
Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP PAKISTAN
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1. Context for EU action gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country

Despite marginal improvements according to the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, Pakistan still lags behind on global gender equality: it ranks 142 out of 146 countries in the report with a 57.5% gender parity - the highest since 2006. The country continues to fare particularly badly on the categories of economic participation and opportunity and health and survival. Despite relatively high disparities, parity in literacy rate and enrolment in secondary and tertiary education are gradually advancing. Like most other countries, Pakistan’s widest gender gap is on Political Empowerment (15.2%). It has had a female head of state for 4.7 years of the last 50 years, and one-tenth of the ministers as well as one-fifth of parliamentarians are women. It is estimated that at the current rate of progress, full parity will be achieved in 149 years – which is equivalent to 8 generations. Pakistan has national and international commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment and has put in place a rather impressive legal, policy and institutional architecture. The slow pace of implementation of these commitments remains the real challenge. This is due in part to limited institutional capacity, weak planning and inadequate budgets as well as a lack of political will and opposition from religious parties and extremists.

Pakistan is signatory to Human Rights Conventions (including CEDAW) and adopted the 2030 SDGs which are integrated in the national development agenda. The Constitution guarantees equality of citizenship and several articles uphold the principle of gender equality. While some laws discriminate against women (family and inheritance) progressive legislations were introduced to protect women’s socioeconomic and legal rights¹. A National Gender Policy Framework was developed in 2022 and Gender Equality & Women Empowerment (GEWE) strategies are available at provincial level to roll-out the provisions of the legislative and policy frameworks. Their implementation and monitoring, however, pose problems. The upcoming general elections, in early 2024, may provide a renewed commitment and impetus to accelerate GEWE reform processes at federal and provincial levels in the run-up to 2030 (SDG 5 targets).

Gender equality in Pakistan remains particularly weak on all four areas of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.² Key areas of concern for the EU still include:

¹ 2016 Women Protection Act; 2011 Prevention of Anti-women Practices; Child Marriage Restraint Acts; 2010 Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act; 2010 Prevention against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act; 2017 Election Act; 2020 Enforcement of Women’s Property Rights (Amendment) Bill; 2017 Hindu Marriage Act; Enactment of Domestic Violence Acts (in all provinces except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

² EU-Pakistan Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021-2025

Widespread sexualised violence against women. It remains prevalent across class, age, region, religion and ethnicity. Pakistan rates as the third most dangerous country for women in the world³ and ranks 150/153 countries on the Women, Peace and Security Index.⁴ Rape is underreported and goes largely unpunished (of 22,000 cases reported in the last 6 years only 18% made it to prosecution and 0.3% led to a conviction⁵).

Limited access to socio-economic empowerment, which disproportionately affects women living in poverty and/or who are vulnerable. Female labor force participation stands at 22% - one of the lowest rates in South Asia. Around 70% of women are in the informal sector (66% in agriculture) with little or no protection. The rate of unemployment and wage gap is higher amongst female workers. The majority do not receive a minimum wage. Key determinants for low participation include lack of education and marketable skills⁶, childcare/domestic work responsibility, restrictions on mobility and vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. The gender gap is more pronounced in jobs requiring higher skills: 25 % of technical roles are held by women. Harassment in public spaces including transport and sexual harassment at the workplace is common, which create barriers for women to advance professionally.

Lack of access to productive resources. Nationally, less than 2% of adult women own a house or land, and women receive only 19% of disbursement of MSME financing. Only 11% of women have bank accounts, compared with 21% of men⁷. Representation of women in formal SMEs is low - only 6% of firms have female ownership and 2% of them have women-only employers (of a total 3.2 million enterprises in Pakistan).

Low coverage of civil registration. This hampers access to inheritance, banking services, education, health care, social protection services and justice, particularly for women. It also impacts on electoral registration (est. 9 million gender gap).

Overall, **lack of data** on women and girls hinders efforts to increase gender equality and to design evidence-based policies that can lift the constraints that hold them back.

Gender inequality in Pakistan should however not be understood from the prism of indices only. The transformation to a gender equal society started at a very low level and improvements can be measured, e.g. women literacy rate rose from 12.20% (1951) to 51.8% (2020); there is no gender gap in higher education; women's participation in the workforce is increasing; the average marriage age rose from 16 (1961) to 26.1 (2010); fertility rate decreased from 6.6 children (1960) to 3.6 (2018); the number of women taking civil service exams quadrupled from 10% (1984) to 40% (2017); gender quota policy in politics has improved women's representation in the national assembly from 0.9% (1990) to 20.2% (2018). An increasing number of women are claiming inheritance rights, contesting gender norms, asserting their autonomy by making marriage and career choices and withdrawing from violent relationships.

Lack of adequate institutions and data⁸ coupled with weak coordination mechanisms however limit the possibility to have a comprehensive picture of these improvements. Going forward, more accurate statistics and monitoring capacities is considered essential for a more comprehensive and informative overview of development.

The UN system is fully present in Pakistan. UN Women leads actions on GEWE with a focus on building an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and girls, with a focus on protection, socio-economic participation and representation⁹. Major development partners

³ In the poll of experts, conducted by Thomson Reuters Foundation.

⁴ Prepared by the Georgetown Institute

⁵ Data from the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan

⁶ 61.6% of girls attend primary school, 34.2% high school and 8.3% are enrolled in tertiary education.

⁷ State of Financial Inclusion of Women in Pakistan, World Bank, 2018

⁸ There is no women's rights Ministry at the federal level. The only institution is the National Commission on the Status of Women, which has a monitoring and advisory role and limited budget.

⁹ UN Women Pakistan Strategic Note (2023-2027).

integrate gender equality into every aspect of their work. There are various CSOs/NGOs targeting programmes on GEWE.¹⁰

In 2020, the EU Delegation to Pakistan commissioned a comprehensive Gender Analysis to provide an overview of the current state of play to guide new priority areas under the MIP 2021-2027 and inform political and policy dialogue. The selection of thematic areas and objectives of the CLIP was developed on this basis. Dialogue with federal and provincial government representatives, civil society, the private sector and other development partners (largely as part of the MIP 2021-27) also fed the process.

The findings of the 2020 Gender Analysis are still relevant, and were complemented by specific sector analyses (e.g. on political leadership) as part of the formulation of Annual Action Programmes in 2022 and 2023 on energy, agricultural development, TVET, human rights and women's participation in governance processes. The MIP 2021-2027 mid-term evaluation reconfirmed the priority areas of intervention and geographical engagement in Pakistan.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

In relation to the 2021-27 programming, to reach the targets set by the EU Gender Action Plan III 2021-25 (GAP III), the EUD needs to ensure that **at least 85%** of all new actions will have gender equality as a significant ([Gender Marker 1](#)) or principal objective ([Gender marker 2](#)) in each priority area/sector of the EU-Pakistan Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP).¹¹ GAP III puts forward “key thematic areas of engagement” and possible objectives¹².

EU and Member States have focused on all three priority areas of the GAP II but without applying a coherent approach and/or common prioritization. A more focused approach is proposed under the MIP 2021-27 and the CLIP, also taking into account the priorities highlighted in the Gender Analysis of Pakistan 2020, the EU-Pakistan Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021–2024 and the CSO roadmap which is being developed in parallel to the CLIP.

The overall objective of the EU and Member States' interventions under the CLIP is to promote women's rights and opportunities in Pakistan. A detailed mapping of EU and Member States' interventions relevant to GEWE is underway.

Four thematic areas of engagement of the GAP III are prioritised. These are:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
2. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women
3. Advancing equal participation and leadership
4. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation

These are elaborated below. In terms of coordination, priority engagement areas 1 to 3 also correspond to the priority of work identified by the development partners' group on gender and development (known as INGAD¹³), co-chaired by the EUD and UN Women, for the period 2023-2024.

¹⁰ There are various specific networks and/or alliances created through donor-funded programmes such as the Gender and Humanitarian Task Force. There are also informal networks advocating for women's rights such as Women's Action Forum and Aurat March. Alliances to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) exist at provincial and the federal levels

¹¹ OECD gender markers G1 and G2 will be applied: for G1 each action should include at least one specific objective on gender equality complying with and/or including targeted actions (OECD gender marker G2).

¹² Refer to chapter 3 of the Joint Communication and to Part II of the SWD.

¹³ Inter-Agency Group on Gender and Development.

The remaining two thematic areas of engagement on sexual and reproductive health and rights and the women, peace and security agenda are equally relevant in Pakistan and will be supported through political/policy dialogue and advocacy (also see point 5 below).

1) Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence (GBV)

The specific thematic objective of the dialogue and actions are the following:

- 1.1 Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online through legislation and effective enforcement;*
- 1.2 Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services.*

Under the MIP 2021-27 priority area 3 (governance) specific objective 1 (strengthened governance and rule of law in line with international standards), the EU is supporting equal access to justice for all with a strong focus on gender¹⁴ (2021-2025). The EU aims at setting-up a follow-up programme with a stronger focus on access to justice and support to victims of GBV. The formulation of the programme will start in 2024 (AAP 2025) based on the findings of the mid-term review of the current intervention.

- MIP 2021-2027 indicator (priority area 3, specific objective 1): “*proportion of victims of violence, disaggregated by gender) in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms*”.

2) Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

The specific thematic objectives of the dialogue and actions are the following:

- 2.1 Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women’s transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems;*
- 2.2 Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources;*
- 2.3 Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy;*
- 2.4 Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys.*

The MIP 2021-27 priority area 1 (green inclusive growth) specific objectives 1 (Sustainable growth of SMEs and MSMEs) and 2 (improve the performance of agribusiness and its integration into local and regional value chains) aim at giving continuity and geographically expanding EU’s current activities in support of the private sector (MSMEs). A particular focus will be given on women-led enterprises. Continued advocacy to recognize their potential as economic actors and extending support to them for acquiring skills or education that assists them in transitioning to employment or achieve market and finance access will be necessary to ensure economic security. Another important area of work would be to bring the informal sector under legal cover, as the majority of women are engaged in informal work and have no employee rights, protection or security.

New interventions in the pipeline under AAP 2022 and 2023 targeting energy and livestock have a strong focus on women and youth, addressing their need to recover economically after the flood and increasing their resilient capacity.

¹⁴ Deliver Justice Programme, co-implemented by UNODC, UNDP and UN Women. DEC 41481.

- MIP 2021-2027 indicator (priority area 1, specific objective 1): “*Number of SMEs and MSMEs (including women led) that are registered with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) with EU support*”; and “*Number of MSMEs (including women led) targeted by skill development programmes*”.
- MIP 2021-2027 indicator (priority area 1, specific objective 2): “*Number of producers (disaggregated by gender) entrepreneurs (disaggregated by gender) and businesses reporting increased profit generated with EU support*”; “*Number of service providers supported by EU interventions*”; and “*Number of beneficiaries with access to financial services with EU support: (a) firms, (b) people (all financial services), (c) people (digital financial services)*”.

The MIP 2021-27 priority area 2 (human capital) specific objective 2 (adequately skilled labour meets the demand of agribusiness, water and energy sub sectors) seeks to enhance the quality of skills/VET in the agribusiness, water and energy sub-sectors. This includes members of the refugee communities. Under AAP 2023, the TVET programme has a strong focus on women: out of 20,000 trainees and 1500 teachers, at least 40% will be women. In addition, 2,000 women will be provided greater access to TVET and to qualification-based employment within the ITC sector (including artificial intelligence, robotics etc.) Empowerment of women is foregrounded as a specific objective through development of non-traditional training programmes and establishment of ‘Centres of Excellence for Women’ in digital skills and high-tech occupational areas. This also addresses priority 4 below on the green transition.

- MIP 2021-2027 indicator (priority area 2, specific objective 2): “*Percentage of TVET graduates (disaggregated by gender) employed*” and “*Number of refugees (disaggregated by gender) included in TVET programs*”.

The MIP 2021–27 priority area 3 (governance), specific objective 2 aims at “*greater adherence to the international agreements that underpin the GSP+ scheme*”. The expected result is “*improved implementation of international human rights, environmental and labour standards, in particular with a focus on the sectors addressed under priority area 1.*” This result will be complementary to the economic growth programme that is the key result of the MIP and strongly focus on enhancing a conducive environment for women’s economic empowerment. Programmatic focus will be on monitoring human rights through independent commissions and GSP+ monitoring support. Advancing labour standards particularly for women will be monitored through specific indicators to get a clearer picture on the economic hurdles women face in Pakistan (AAP 2024 in the pipeline).

- MIP 2021-2027 indicator (priority area 3, specific objective 2): “*Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex*”; and “*Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age*”.

3) Advancing equal participation and leadership

The specific thematic objective of the dialogue and actions is the following:

- 3.1 *Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making*
- 3.2 *Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights*

Under the ongoing “Support to parliamentary development in Pakistan” programme (2021–2024)¹⁵ the EU is strengthening the capacity of female parliamentarians in the Women Parliamentary Caucus at federal and provincial levels, with in a view to enhance their voice and participation in the political arena. The on-going programme of support to the rule of

¹⁵ DEC 39-285

law (2021-2025)¹⁶ also supports measures to raise women's awareness of their rights and to help women and girl's access justice and assistance (this includes inter alia developing alternative dispute resolution and legislative reforms targeting child marriage, inheritance/property rights).

Under AAP 2023, the EU has formulated a gender-targeted intervention (Gender Marker 2 (G2)) to support the creation of enabling conditions for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making in political and public life in Pakistan, directly targeting SDG 5 (target 5.5).¹⁷ The intervention will have a strong focus on local-level communities, social movements and professional associations led by women.

4) Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation

The specific thematic objectives of the dialogue and actions are the following:

4.1 Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, addressing climate change in their daily lives and preserving the natural environment are recognised and valued;

4.2 Women and men in all their diversity, increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities and alternative livelihoods in the green economy and the circular economy;

The MIP 2021–27 priority area 1 (green inclusive growth) is centred on the opportunities the green transition can offer for a sustainable development led by responsible natural resources management, increased access to energy and renewable energy sources as well as improvement of energy efficiency production, distribution, accessibility and consumption.

- MIP 2021-2027 indicator (priority 1, specific objective 4): *“Number of MSMEs (including women led) using production facilities supplied by renewable energy”*.

Under AAP 2022 and 2023, the energy projects identified ('Energy +' and 'PEACE II') aim to provide decent work particularly for youth and women along with equal access and control over clean water, energy, transport infrastructure.

The Team Europe Initiative (TEI) will also contribute to the green growth and green transition supporting Pakistan on its green recovery path through sustainable natural resource-based green job creation (i.e. in agriculture, forestry and value chains).

EU and MS will further support complementary actions aimed at ensuring the availability of skilled workforce, access to finance and strengthen climate change adaptation and mitigation to ensure an inclusive and green development. Enabling factors for production such as access to finance, energy and skilled workforce will be supported through the MIP and will complement the TEI. The TEI, like the overall MIP, has as primary target group youth and women and aspects of crosscutting nature such as connectivity, technology transfer and digitalisation.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

The targeted action(s) will mostly support priority area 3 of the MIP 2021-2027. They relate to SO6, Result 4 *“improved access to social and economic rights”* corresponding to GAP III thematic areas of engagement 2 (strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women) and 3 (advancing equal participation and leadership).

A G2 intervention is in the pipeline under AAP 2023 to support the creation of enabling conditions for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making in political and public life in Pakistan, leading in turn to improved access to

¹⁶ DEC 41481

¹⁷ DEC/ACT 61799

social and economic rights.¹⁸ The intervention also addresses the critical issue of civic registration which has implications for planning processes (supply side) as well as for access (demand side). Without a National Identification Card, women cannot access education, healthcare, social protection and other services, get their inheritance and property registered, open a bank account or register as voter.

Under the second half of the MIP, this intervention may be combined with the following targeted actions:

- to **strengthen the women machinery** (MIP 2021-2027 cross-cutting objective). The National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women are mandated to examine policies, programmes and other measures taken by the Government for women's development and gender equality. Departments of Women's Development at the provincial levels and Ministry for Human Rights at the Federal level have an overarching role of leading the legislative agenda, coordination with other departments for gender mainstreaming, protection and promotion of human rights. Each ministry has dedicated gender focal points. The extensive National Women Machinery (NWMs) has not emerged as an effective watchdog body.
- to enhance **regulations and practices on property ownership of women, inheritance rights for women and access to identification for all** in these targeted areas such as birth, NIC and marriage certificate (Priority area 3, objectives 1 and 2 on governance and GSP+/international human rights)

The MIP 2021-2027 contains the following indicators to measure progress:

- Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age with EU support disaggregated by sex;
- Number of people who have been issued computerised national identity cards with EU support, disaggregated by sex;
- Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/ or control;
- Number of functioning independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

The EU, in coordination with Member States, will continue its engagement in political and policy dialogue at all levels with the Government of Pakistan.

All GAP III thematic areas of engagement will be accompanied by a structured political/policy dialogue.

EU will actively participate in the Annual Joint Commission EU-Pakistan and Human Rights dialogue (with Women rights and gender equality as one thematic agenda point), support action of the Government and civil society against GBV and for the empowerment of women, continue the dialogue with the Pakistani authorities concerning the remaining reservation against article 3 of ICCPR, on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights inter alia.

Furthermore, EU will focus on involvement of and extensive consultation with development partners, CSOs, Women's Organizations and relevant stakeholders. The EU has been co-chairing alongside UN Women the Inter-Agency Group for Gender and Development (INGAD) since 2021, allowing for close coordination with development partners. The upcoming Action

¹⁸ DEC/ACT 61799

on women leadership will provide a platform for more regular, structured consultations with women's rights and other civil society organisations on GEWE.

Participation in fora, round tables, meetings will be guaranteed in order to advance EU positions on key areas in the field of gender. In the same spirit, EUD also actively supports advocacy events and campaigns that promotes GEWE (e.g. 16 days of Activism campaigns, Pakistan's national rural conference, 2nd edition of the Gender and Climate Action with FR)

Regular dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment with CSOs in the framework of the CSO Roadmap are foreseen.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

The EU's public diplomacy aims at supporting events on the following days under the EU Communication strategy.

- Pakistani Women's Day – February 12.
- International Women's Day – March 8.
- International Day of Rural Women – October 15.
- 16 days of activism against GBV – November 25 to December 10

For the organization of and participation to these events the EU will coordinate and cooperate with Member States. EUD is also keen to join forces with Members States when the opportunity presents itself to support actions aiming at promoting the GEWE agenda, e.g. the Gender Climate Award initiated by France.

6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

No specific amount has been earmarked in the EUD's cooperation facility to support the implementation of GAP III at country level. Resources will be mobilized at Action level considering the gender relevance in the MIP 2021-2027. Sufficient financial support will be committed in order to achieve the objectives/indicators foreseen in the present CLIP.

Signature by Head of Delegation